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## PRESENT TENDENCIES IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE keynote of current educational thought seems to have been sounded by Professor John Dewey in his saying that, *the school is not preparation for life: it is life*. Education is to provide for the future needs of pupils by providing for their real present needs. One of the most notable and comprehensive tendencies of secondary education, and of all education, is accordingly the tendency to seek an understanding of the living, growing persons who go to school; and to treat them in a way to promote their healthy growth. This doctrine is sound at bottom. Persons are the most precious things in this life; and child persons as precious as persons fully matured. In this view we have true humanism. It is a view that makes the school interesting. It is moral; for what is morality after all but fullness of personal life? It is religious, too. "The knowledge of ourselves," said John Calvin, "is not only an incitement to seek after God, but likewise a considerable assistance toward finding him."

On the one side, such doctrine as this is leading us into individualism. It prompts the demand for free election of studies in the secondary school; for individualized processes of instruction.

On the other side, the study of development has shown how strangely dependent the individual is on his social relationships. We see in fact, that there is nothing worth the name of human personality that has not arisen under the stress and strain of getting on with one's fellows. So we have come to attach new significance to the mere fact that in school many young people come together and have varied dealings one with another. We are seeing that social intercourse is not a mere accident of school education but one of the chief things in school education.

We may go further and say that, the school is not only life: it is preparation for life. Just because it is life, it looks forward to larger life. Any life that does not look forward is poor and

mean; and we should make a losing bargain if we exchanged the old school that concerned itself only with the future, for a new school which concerned itself only with the present.

So our secondary education looks forward to the citizenship which awaits all of our students, and consciously prepares them for its duties. Whether they are destined for the more extended training of the University or not, it undertakes to direct their attention toward public affairs, well knowing that the time is already come for them to take anticipatory interest in such things. It takes account, too, of the fact that each citizen must have a life work peculiarly his own, in order to discharge his full obligation to the body politic. How secondary education may pay due regard to this fact and yet avoid the injustice of binding our youth at an early age to a course in life which may not be rightly their own, is one of the hardest problems with which we have to deal.

May I venture to add, that our secondary education looks even to life beyond this life; or rather to life above and all about this life. We are finding that the seething adolescence of our academies and high schools is above all skeptical and religious. The two things go together and belong together at this age. Education does not altogether meet the needs of the present life of our youth if it does not verge upon the shadowy fields of things too real to be seen.

The more important tendencies of our secondary education seem to lie in the directions I have indicated. Permit me now to call your attention to a more particular consideration of some of the topics already touched upon.

I. And first some tendencies affecting our courses of study. A recent writer has said that "The time for the finishing school has gone by." With equal truth it may be said that the time for the "fitting school" has gone by. I do not mean by "fitting school" a school for the education of youth who are preparing for college; but rather a school which prepares for college whether it educates or not. The proper business of every school is education. The growing recognition of this fact is one of the most marked of present tendencies. The sharp

distinction between preparation for college and "preparation for life" is fading out. I think we may say our present working hypothesis is that, so far as general culture is concerned, preparation for higher school, rightly conceived, coincides with preparation for life. I do not extend this principle to secondary schools of a vocational character. And I am not enough of a doctrinaire to accept it as a finality with a regard even to schools of general culture. But it has stood examination and trial sufficiently well to warrant us in employing it as a working hypothesis. Taken in conjunction with a second assumption which I will mention later, I think it will prove very useful in the future organization of our secondary education.

We may put it in different ways. Secondary education which is not good enough for the purposes of the colleges is not good enough for the purposes of life. Education which fails to give good secondary preparation for life, fails also to give good secondary preparation for college. Either way you turn it, the doctrine calls for some reëxamination of our school curriculums, and perhaps for some little change.

In the history of our courses of study, we begin with one fixed and strongly unified course for all. The demand for a recognition of varied needs has led to numerous changes from this old, invariable standard. Parallel courses we were first offered, each of them fixed and definite. Then options were allowed in one or all of these parallel courses. The number of such courses was increased. The range of options was enlarged. Then we began to hear of the doctrine of free election. This seems to be the polar opposite of that fixed course for all with which we started. It was necessary for us to come to this extreme, and get a survey of the whole movement from this side, in order to find out just where in the intervening territory we belong.

Will you permit a New Yorker who has long been a Californian to say that some of us on the Pacific Coast have looked with a certain wonder on the outbreak of the idea of the free election of studies in the East during the past year or two. The reported discussions of this subject sound strangely like

echoes of our own battles of eight or ten years ago. The sun has not yet learned to move from West to East. So I can explain this phenomenon only by supposing that President Jordan, in the free field of a new university was able to precipitate a movement which President Eliot has got underway more gradually in the established order of these older states.

We have not come to doctrinal agreement in California; but we have found a *modus vivendi* and have settled down to the detailed consideration of the question where between the two extremes, of the fixed course and the course with nothing fixed, the highest educational efficiency is to be found.

This, I take it, is the question for real school men in real schools to consider. One of the first things that appear from this sort of study is the fact that English is an indispensable subject in any curriculum. This is admitted by nearly everyone, even when it is not admitted that any other study is indispensable. English has taken the fixed place of Latin in the old curriculum. If other single subjects are not essential, we are coming to think that an outlook into certain other broad fields of study is necessary. The Committee of Ten led the way in pointing out this need, and the later Committee on College-Entrance Requirements has formulated a general plan under which the need may be met. In fact, the committee last named seems to have thrown a real Copernican suggestion into the midst of our confusion in this matter. What they have proposed will not differ very greatly in any given case from what is already customary in many schools. But it serves to show how the Ptolemaic tables of courses which many large schools present may be simplified and made to show forth the ideas which they really embody. Parallel courses with a fair number of options; election limited only by the requirement of "constants" in groups; and even free election under the direction of an efficient school principal, will all come in practice to pretty much the same thing; and what they come to is fairly represented by the report of this national Committee on College-Entrance Requirements.

But what does it all amount to? We may put the case in

some such way as this. Education from the cradle to the grave is largely a matter of keeping good company. For our adolescent, with his vibrations between the desire to be let alone and his extreme craving for companionship, habituation to good company is of prime importance. The school tends to set one free from mere dependence upon the actual companionships of daily intercourse, extending the relationship, as it does, to the great and good of all times and all lands. It increases one's capacity for finding companions in the secret chambers of books and in the still more shrewdly hidden secrets of the material world. Our young scholar is a provincial of the provincials. He must now go to the court, and come to know the wisest and fairest of this world. He is to be introduced to the best, and among them he may make such special friendships as he is fitted for.

Something like this, I believe, is the significance of Matthew Arnold's saying that in secondary schools the youth is to find "vital knowledge," though we may not make Matthew Arnold responsible for our interpretation of vital knowledge. It is only contact with the world of culture that can bring our youngsters out of their crude, provincial, individuality; that can really vitalize their humanity. They must be brought into relations with that one world of culture if they are to be made really alive. But they may touch it more intimately at some points than at others, for what is vital knowledge for one is not always vital knowledge for another.

These considerations suggest various conclusions. No study is worthy a place in our program which has not commanded the full devotion of some master mind. All students must be introduced to the same civilization, and since all are human their several ways of approaching it will not be fundamentally different. What seems still more significant is this: Even if it be true that what is best for one student is a little different from what is best for another, the fact remains that each student needs for his own purposes a well organized, unitary curriculum. I fear we are tending toward miscellaneous election from a miscellaneous mass of offered courses. But there is a

deeper tendency, which will surely become dominant—a tendency toward organic election from what is offered, no matter how miscellaneous that may be. A different curriculum for each student, if you will; but a real curriculum. Before leaving this question of the course of study, let us glance at the relation of the colleges to the schools. There has been a good deal of just complaint from the side of the schools, that the colleges shaped their entrance requirements solely with reference to what they believed to be their own needs, and not at all with reference to the conditions which must be reckoned with in the schools. Of late, I have heard complaint from the side of college men that the secondary-school men were becoming too independent: that they expect the college to accept whatever they may offer. There is great hope for the future in this growing self-respect of secondary-school teachers. It suggests very pointedly that school and college should meet on common ground and work out their common problems together. It was a bad state of things when the question whether students preparing for college should take one study or another in the secondary school, could be decided by a compromise between rival college departments, represented in a faculty meeting, without a moment's consideration of what may be intrinsically best for the students themselves at this stage of their schooling. College faculties should remember that every vote which they pass relative to entrance requirements is legislation for the internal working of secondary schools. Such legislation should at least be based on some intelligent conception of the nature and functions of the secondary school. To put it in other terms: the question of college-entrance requirements is a question of relationship between two institutions, each having its separate responsibility to the public. The college should set the secondary school the example of considering both terms of this relationship with perfect fairness. It has sometimes happened that the men of the academies and high schools have actually taken a more comprehensive view of this question than have the men of the colleges and universities.

Certain recent changes in college-entrance requirements are hard to interpret. I refer to the adoption of such extremely

flexible schemes of admission requirements as those of Columbia University and the University of Michigan. Can it be that these institutions, in despair of working out a satisfactory scheme of prescribed preparatory studies, are now going to the opposite extreme of requirements so general and variable that they do not quite insure to the student meeting them that his course of preparation shall have been a good secondary-school course? I do not raise this question with any cock-sure conviction that the criticism which it hints at is just. It is rather a question of open-minded doubt. Of one thing, however, I feel reasonably certain; and that is that this question of admission requirements is an educational question, and should be settled on educational grounds. I think, too, that the same form of settlement must be employed as that which serves in dealing with the larger question of the proper formulation of curriculums for all non-technical secondary schools. At least for present purposes, the method followed by the Committee on College-Entrance Requirements in this matter seems worthy of general acceptance. Some specific recommendations of this committee are open to objection. The question for college men and secondary-school men alike must be, "Is this the sort of curriculum which is best for educational purposes in the secondary grades?" and that means, "Does such a curriculum offer the best way in which the secondary school can present life at its best?"

The recent history of studies is significant. It appears from the reports of the Commissioner of Education that between the years 1894 and 1899 the percentage of pupils in our secondary schools studying Latin, French, German, algebra, geometry, physical geography, physiology, rhetoric, and general history was on the increase, the advance being especially marked in the case of Latin, algebra, geometry, rhetoric, and history. In the same period the percentage of those studying Greek, trigonometry, astronomy, physics, geology, and psychology declined. For a portion of the studies a report is presented covering ten years, from 1889 to 1899. In that time the percentage studying Latin had advanced from 33.62 to 50.29, and the advance in algebra, geometry, and general history, though



less marked, was very noteworthy. In these years the actual number of students attending our secondary schools had increased from a little less than 298,000 to a little more than 580,000.

It would seem that in spite of this enormous increase in attendance the schools had been gravitating back toward concentration on a smaller number of studies, and those chiefly the central studies of the old humanistic curriculum with the omission of Greek. While Greek seems to have declined proportionately, the falling off is very slight, and the actual increase in the number of students studying that glorious old language was not far from twelve thousand. It is likely that physics, which shows the greatest retrogression in the ten-year period, had made greater advance than the most of the other subjects in methods of presentation. I think it likely that the percentage of students studying physics by laboratory methods, if it could be determined, would show a substantial increase.

On the whole, then, we may safely conclude that in their actual working our secondary schools, at the same time that they are increasing enormously in attendance, are becoming more conservative in their schemes of instruction, are less given to what have been called "short information courses," are more humanistic, and on the scientific side are doing more in the direction of an improvement of instruction than in that of the extension of studies.

We may note in passing that in the same period, despite the tremendous increase in attendance at higher institutions, the number of students in our secondary schools who were not preparing for college increased more rapidly than those who were; 18.66 per cent. were preparing for college in 1889-90 and 14.05 per cent. in 1898-9.

2. There are many reasons why the question of teachers is more important than the question of studies. And the conviction is now well grounded that teachers of secondary schools as well as teachers of primary schools must be specially trained for their work. Twenty years ago this was not true. No one institution has done more to bring American school men to a new

mind in this matter than has your own Columbia, with its Teachers College. But the pioneering was done by western state universities, and they do not intend to be left behind in a movement which has now become national. Voices will still be heard protesting against the newer demand for professional training on the part of those who would teach in our high schools and academies. But the time is past when such objection can seriously hamper the general movement. Let it be added that the time is past when that movement can be seriously hampered by mistakes and inadequacies in the training attempted. But it is necessary that such mistakes and inadequacies be corrected as rapidly as possible, and such correction is now the order of the day.

What do we look for in our teachers? First, by all means, a moral quality that is more than negatively good—some real warmth of loyalty to righteousness; and, in addition, something that is contagious about it. It is the characteristic that it may be caught by others which elevates it from a merely personal quality to a teacher quality. Secondly, manners in full accord with such morals. A divorce of manners from morals is bad for both. Thirdly, a living intellect. To be such it must be active and must live on substantial food. Fourthly, the disposition to communicate and some aptitude for such communication. Fifthly, the tendency to improve and to coöperate with the others in making improvement, which is what I understand by professional spirit.

Some of this must be got by birth or not at all. For such portion training colleges are in no way responsible. Then there is a great deal to be done by way of improving natural endowments on the peculiarly personal side; but we only make ourselves tedious when we draw up for prospective teachers classified lists of moral virtues and their contrary vices. Better, so far as these things are concerned, encourage that self-respect which acts frankly its own part, and that respect for excellence which renders one responsive to good example.

We get down to the serious business of training in that which remains, and difficult questions here present themselves.

Teaching is an art, and we shall disappoint the expectations we raise if we undertake to teach it wholly as applied science. But it is an art which is steadily drawing nearer to the related sciences. At present it is more scientific than oratory; less scientific than medicine. It must then be mastered as an art, and so is very intimately bound up with those personal qualities which it is difficult to treat of apart from mere subjective sentiment. What sort of instruction is available here, if instructor and student would both maintain a proper self-respect?

The faithful observation of good teaching done by others, as in the German *Probejahr*. A difficult thing this is to manage. It repays effort, however, if it awakens the conviction that one can learn from the best that is going on near at hand.

Here work enough to watch  
The Master work, and catch  
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of  
the tool's true play.

Then practice teaching under guidance. Not enough of this to master the process, however. Such training sets and stiffens like a mold. But enough to enable the beginner to avoid waste of time and of child material—costly stuff—in finding his own best way of doing his own work; enough, too, to discover and cast out the cases of born incompetence.

If the sciences do not yet dominate this art of teaching, as they already dominate the art of medicine, they are having more and more to do with it, especially the sciences of human development. Enough of this our prospective teacher should get to face him hopefully toward the scientific side of things, in confidence that more and more definite guidance in his art will come from that direction. Enough history of education, too, to help him understand that education is a progressive aspect of human society—to put him in the attitude of coöperation with fellow schoolmen in furthering that progress. Finally, emphasis must be laid, all the time, on soundness of scholarship. The colleges that train our secondary-school teachers should give forth no uncertain sound in their requirement of scholarly excellence. Otherwise they will be likely to fail in the whole of their

undertaking. Even the morality of their students—the real if not the conventional morality—will be uncertain if their scholarly standards are low.

We may be modest in making claims with regard to the professional training toward which the teaching craft of our secondary schools is tending. But many signs show that the tendency is well under way; and with all of its present inadequacy, the training offered is working gradually toward stability, solidity, and effectiveness.

Yet after all this is said, the discovery of teachers is as important as the making of teachers. The fact that so much of the real teacher-quality is inborn gives emphasis to this view. In part this discovery of teachers may be the work of colleges and training schools. In part it is the work of the superintendents and principals. But in a larger sense it is a result of a favorable organization of the whole set of conditions and associations which surround the teacher's calling. We look for real life, and life at its soundest and best in these secondary schools. To have it, it is necessary that young men and women who represent our American life at its soundest and best, shall be drawn into teaching positions in these schools; and that those who show special aptitude for such work shall find good inducements to stay in it. Such inducements are the opportunity to do their work to good advantage, reasonably good salaries, and such social standing as will encourage self-respect on their part and on the part of their families. It is plain that these inducements are to be provided in part by the action of boards of education and in part by the general attitude of the communities back of those boards. The real discoverer is the community, acting under such leadership as it may choose.

But there are other agencies at work. Whatever is done to render education more professional, tends to draw toward it men who have professional tastes. In this point of view, the teaching body is the discoverer. Excellence in the profession tends to attract and discover excellence; and by cherishing most religiously the standard of our profession we make it more worthy to be cherished.

Again, every advantage in the scientific, historical, or philosophical treatment of education tends to draw to it persons of intellectual taste and ability. In recent years we have seen men turning to education because of the marked improvement of our pedagogical literature. Then, the knitting together of the interests of our secondary schools and universities works in the same direction. In some parts of the country, the teacher in a high school finds himself, in a way, brought into the life of the universities. The influence of such a relation is not to be disregarded.

Yet the chief responsibility comes back to boards of control and the communities to which the teachers minister. We cannot urge too strongly upon them the necessity that they discover superior teachers for their secondary schools, by making the teaching positions in those schools such as superior men can accept and hold without loss of self-respect. Within the past few years, we have repeatedly seen first-class men throwing up high-school positions in disgust at the petty politics with which those positions were beset, or in despair of being able to provide for their families with the salaries which those positions offered. Such a state of affairs is deadening.

It is difficult to say conclusively whether the general movement of the time is forward or backward in these particulars; but it is my profound conviction that on the whole we are improving. There are many indications that the standard of preparation for secondary-school positions is rapidly advancing. Partly as cause and partly as effect of this change, the general standing of secondary-school teachers in the community seems to be rising. A rapid increase in the number of college graduates seeking high-school positions may prevent salaries from rising proportionately with other forms of public recognition, but I do not think we need fear the ultimate outcome of this condition.

Within the universities there is observable a growing sentiment in favor of requiring a minimum amount of graduate work of students who are to be recommended as teachers in secondary schools. It has been suggested that this may lead in time to the recognition of the master's degree as the standard teaching

degree. For many reasons this notion seems worthy of serious consideration.

Speaking broadly, the doctrine that the school is real life may be expected to work to the advantage of teachers and teaching. It puts the school into closer touch with the home, and carries into the school the better standards of the community. The growth of wealth and the sharpening of social distinctions may in some measure negative this tendency; but in other ways it will be reinforced by those very conditions. It is not too much to expect that the new century will see a new generation of great school men. If there has been no Thomas Arnold nor Edward Thring in our American schools, we have had many excellent teachers, from Ezekiel Cheever down. Let our best men find encouragement and recognition, both public and fraternal, awaiting them within the teaching profession, as other men have found in other professions; and our teachers of world-greatness will in due time appear.

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(To be continued)